Happy Holidays, VA! I hope you had a wonderful Thanksgiving and that the rest of this year is just as enjoyable! You’ll notice a few changes in this newsletter issue thanks to the support of the Veterans Health Administration’s (VHA’s) Section 508 Office. Members of my staff participated in the inaugural session of a new virtual program to be offered by that office beginning in January 2014. During the interactive Bring Your Own Document (BYOD) program, VHA Section 508 staff share screens virtually with participants and show them how to make their PDF, Word, and PowerPoint documents accessible. You can email Myra.Coffield@va.gov for more information. The VHA Section 508 Office also offers a tutorial series on creating accessible documents. These tutorials—Creating Accessible PDFs with Adobe Acrobat Professional, Creating Accessible Documents with Microsoft Word 2010, Creating Accessible Documents with Microsoft PowerPoint 2010—and other great resources are available at http://www.ehealth.va.gov/508.

We received VA’s Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey results that relate to diversity and inclusion. Specifically, these reports reflect employee responses to survey items that constitute the Inclusion Index that our office developed in collaboration with the U.S. Office of Personnel (OPM) and later adopted as “the New IQ” for government-wide use. Not surprisingly, VA’s IQ Index (55 percent) is very close to the government-wide Index (56 percent). The relatively low scores confirm what we’ve been saying for two years now—that while the Federal Government and VA have done relatively well with diversity outreach, we are facing significant inclusion challenges. We now must shift gears to address internal inclusion strategies that speak to employee engagement, empowerment, and retention. We will address VA’s survey scores by Administration and will provide examples of VA’s inclusion strategies in future issues of the Diversity@Work newsletter. More to come on those but in the meantime I encourage all of you to think creatively about inclusion strategies in the work you do. Continued on the next page.
DAS Message

Continued from Previous Page

VA should be proud that the Inclusion Index ODI’s Workforce Analysis Team initiated and developed with OPM has now been implemented government-wide. This new metric will help us drive change in public service. Well done!

Finally, ODI—along with the rest of VA Central Office—observed National Native American Heritage Month this past November. Our most recent event featured remarks by Stephanie Birdwell, Director, VA Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, and Navajo Estelle Bowman, Assistant Director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, Office of Tribal Relations. It was a terrific educational event. I hope your facility held similarly successful programs. You can share your event photos with us by emailing odi@va.gov. Once again, Happy Holidays! —Georgia Coffey, VA Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diversity and Inclusion

VACO/Field Notes

Welcome, New ODI Employees!

ODI welcomes Mr. Michael Youngblood, Ms. Cyreena Dail, and Dr. Sarah Scott! Michael Youngblood serves as one of the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)/Diversity Specialist Team Leaders on ODI’s Outreach and Retention Team. Since 2009, he has served in the Veterans Health Administration’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion. Mr. Youngblood has over 13 years in diversity and inclusion, and EEO experience in the Federal sector. He is a retired Army Colonel with a Bachelor’s degree in Sociology. Welcome, Mr. Youngblood!

Cyreena Dail serves as the program manager for VA’s National Diversity Internship Program on ODI’s Outreach and Retention Team. Since graduating from Trinity College with a B.A. in Human Relations, Ms. Dail has served as a Federal employee with the U.S. Department of State for five years supporting its diplomatic mission. She is excited to bring her education and experience to increase inclusion within the Department of Veterans Affairs, and to support Veterans and their families to the best of her ability. Welcome, Ms. Dail!

Dr. Sarah Scott is a Presidential Management Fellow, appointed as a Management Analyst on ODI’s Workforce Analysis Team. She is also an international research consultant, predominantly within the fields of human trafficking and human rights, with a professional emphasis on and personal interest in Southeast Asia. Dr. Scott received a Ph.D. with distinction in International Psychology (Organizations and Systems Research concentration) from The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, a M.A. degree with honors in Clinical Psychology from the University of Central Florida, and a B.A. degree with honors in Psychology from Baylor University. Welcome, Dr. Scott!

Farewell!

ODI wishes a fond farewell to Kenneth Hunter, VA’s National Diversity Internship Program (NDIP) Manager and VA’s National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Program Manager on ODI’s Outreach and Retention Team, who has accepted a position as the Deputy EEO Officer and Diversity Manager for the Naval District of Washington. For information on the NDIP, contact Cyreena Dail at Cyreena.Dail@va.gov. For information on VA’s LGBT Program, contact Michael Youngblood at Michael.Youngblood@va.gov.
Commemorate

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And from making health care more affordable to ensuring new technologies are accessible, we have continued to build on that progress, guided by the belief that equal access and equal opportunity are common principles that unite us as one Nation.

On the 20th International Day of Persons with Disabilities, we reaffirm that the struggle to ensure the rights of every person does not end at our borders, but extends to every country and every community. It continues for the woman who is at greater risk of abuse because of a disability and for the child who is denied the chance to get an education because of the way he was born. It goes on for the 1 billion people with disabilities worldwide who all too often cannot attend school, find work, access medical care, or receive fair treatment. These injustices are an affront to our shared humanity—which is why the United States has joined 153 other countries around the world in signing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which calls on all nations to establish protections and liberties like those afforded under the Americans with Disabilities Act. While Americans with disabilities already enjoy these rights at home, they frequently face barriers when they travel, conduct business, study, or reside overseas. Ratifying the Convention in the Senate would reaffirm America’s position as the global leader on disability rights and better position us to encourage progress toward inclusion, equal opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for persons with disabilities worldwide.

We have come far in the long march to achieve equal opportunity for all. But even as we partner with countries across the globe in affirming universal human rights, we know our work will not be finished until the inherent dignity and worth of all persons with disabilities is guaranteed. Today, let us renew our commitment to meeting that challenge here in the United States, and let us redouble our efforts to build new paths to participation, empowerment, and progress around the world.

Human Rights Day and Human Rights Week

VA joins the Nation in commemorating Human Rights Day on December 10 and Human Rights Week December 10–17. From the 2012 Presidential Proclamation (http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/12/10/presidential-proclamation-human-rights-day-and-human-rights-week-2012): Sixty-four years ago, a group of nations emerging from the shadow of war joined together to light a path toward lasting peace. They adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—a revolutionary document that recognized the inherent dignity and inalienable rights of all people as the “foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world.” As we mark the anniversary of that historic act, we celebrate the rights the Declaration recognized and recommit to strengthening them in the 21st century. The United States was built on the promise that freedom and fairness are not endowed only to some—they are the birthright of all. Ordinary Americans have fought to fully realize that vision for more than two centuries, courageously forging a democracy that empowers each of us equally and affords every citizen due process under the law. Just as we have cultivated these rights here at home, so have we worked to promote them abroad. Societies across the globe are reaching toward a future where leaders are fairly and duly elected; where everyone can get an education and make a good living; where women and girls are free from violence, as well as free to pursue the same opportunities as men and boys; and where the voice of the people rings clear and true. As they do, the United States stands with them, ready to uphold the basic decency and human rights that underlie everything we have achieved and all our progress yet to come.

Men and women everywhere long for the freedom to determine their destiny, the dignity that comes with work, the comfort that comes with faith, and the justice that exists when governments serve their people. These dreams are common to people all around the world, and the values they represent are universal. This week, we rededicate ourselves to fortifying civil rights in America, while reaffirming that all people around the world should live free from the threat of extrajudicial killing, torture, oppression, and discrimination. And we renew our promise that the United States will be a partner to any nation, large or small, that will contribute to a world that is more peaceful and more prosperous, more just and more free. Continued on page 5.
The Section 508 Program Office currently offers training classes to help you understand Section 508. Everyone has a responsibility to create information that meets the Federal Section 508 standards. Email section508@va.gov. All meetings will be held via Microsoft Lync. All times are EST:
- Introduction to Section 508: December 2, 1 to 3 p.m., and December 11, 10 a.m. to noon.
- Creating Accessible Microsoft Word Documents and Converting to Accessible PDF: December 3, 1 to 3 p.m.
- Converting Scanned PDF Documents to Accessible PDF: December 17, 1 to 3 p.m.
- Introduction to JAWS: December 9, 10 to 11 a.m.
- Creating Accessible PowerPoint Presentations: December 5, 2 to 3 p.m.
- Creating Accessible Excel Files: December 10, 2 to 3 p.m.

508 Compliance “FireEyes” Lunch & Learn Training

If you produce VA content for the public and internal facing websites this information is for you. The VA Section 508 Program Office partnered with Deque Systems to roll-out the enterprise Section 508 compliance testing application suite throughout all of VA’s web-content sites. FireEyes is an unprecedented, next generation web accessibility tool that ensures both static and dynamic content within a web portfolio are 508 compliant. Section 508 applies to both disabled VA employees and disabled persons in the general public who use VA services. These groups are all stakeholders in the implementation of the Section 508 technical requirements and if the Program Office deploys applications and web content that are non-compliant, a formal 508 complaint can be filed against the agency. Through FireEyes and other uses of technology, VA is ensuring that all the information that it uses and supplies is readily accessible to all people despite any physical limitation that they may have. VA program managers, application developers, or web content providers should send an invite request to section508@va.gov to sign up for the lunch and learn training session on December 3 at 2 p.m. EST.

Windows-Eyes User Training Remote on Lync

December 5 and 6, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. EST (both days required), the Section 508 Program Office will offer Window-Eyes training. Window-Eyes is a screen-reading program that gives blind, visually-impaired, and otherwise print-disabled individuals access to information on their screens by using speech synthesizer output. This training is designed to help users who are new to Window-Eyes to learn the basic controls for testing computer content, and to serve as a reference for the occasional Window-Eyes user. If you are a software developer, software quality assurance, system analyst, or customer support staff, this class will help you provide Section 508-conformant IT resources. It is important that, as you evaluate the accessibility of Electronic and Information Systems content, you use a screen reader. It is possible to test screen content for accessibility without being a “power user”; and that is the goal of this class. The class will also help customer support staff to more efficiently work with Window-Eyes users to solve common problems. This class is a prerequisite for Window-Eyes Script/App Development Training. Email Vicki.Leon@va.gov.

2013 Annual Compendium of Disability Statistics and Research-to-Policy Roundtable

The release of the Annual Compendium of Disability Statistics and the Third Annual Research-to-Policy Roundtable will convene in Washington, D.C. on Wednesday, December 11, 2013 at the Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room SD-G50. The Compendium release briefing will be held from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m. and will include a one-hour workshop on the sources and uses of disability statistics. This will be followed by the Research-to-Policy Roundtable from 1:00 - 3:00 pm, which will provide an opportunity for disability advocates, policymakers and researchers to highlight this research and discuss ways that policies and programs can better serve persons with disabilities with a focus on employment. For more information, email disability.statistics@unh.edu.

Finding and Understanding Data: RAMP and Beyond

This training provides you with an opportunity to learn about tools and resources available to help anyone in VHA efficiently find, understand and utilize data. After this training, you will be ready to begin using the VHA Reports and Measures Portal (RAMP), a Google-like search tool that provides a one stop shop to find VHA Reports and Data from over 20 program offices in one centralized location! You will also be introduced to Reporting and Analytics Field Training (RAFT), a one stop data and analytic training site that is in development; and Field Based Analytics (FBA), a resource currently available to help you effectively utilize data in your job. To view this streaming session now, visit http://www.myvehucampus.com/fast/evt4430. Continued on page 6.
Bill of Rights Day

VA joins the Nation in commemorating the Bill of Rights Day on December 15. From the 2012 Presidential Proclamation (http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/12/14/presidential-proclamation-bill-rights-day-2012): When President Franklin D. Roosevelt recognized the 150th anniversary of our Nation’s Bill of Rights, he called it the “great American charter of personal liberty and human dignity.” He understood that the freedoms it protects—among them speech, worship, assembly, and due process—are freedoms that reinforce one another. They form the bedrock of the American promise, and we cannot fully realize one without realizing them all. Today, as we work to reinforce human rights at home and around the globe, we reaffirm our belief that government of the people, by the people, and for the people inspires the stability and individual opportunity that serve as a basis for peace in our world.

In adopting the 10 Constitutional Amendments that make up the Bill of Rights, the Framers sought to balance the power and security of a new Federal Government with a guarantee of our most basic civil liberties. They acted on a conviction that rings as true today as it did two centuries ago: unlocking a nation’s potential depends on empowering all its people. The Framers also called upon posterity to carry on their work—to keep our country moving forward and bring us ever closer to a more perfect Union.

Generations of patriots have taken up that challenge. They have been defenders who stood watch at freedom’s frontier, marchers who broke down barriers to full equality, dreamers who pushed America from what it was toward what it ought to be. Now it falls to us to build on their work. On Bill of Rights Day, we celebrate the liberties secured by our forebears, pay tribute to all who have fought to protect and expand our civil rights, and rededicate ourselves to driving a new century of American progress.

2014 WRP Set to Kick Off

Consider an Intern!

ODI is pleased to announce the start of the Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) for fiscal year (FY) 2014. The WRP provides Federal job opportunities for college students and recent graduates who have disabilities, including Veterans. The U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy and the U.S. Department of Defense coordinate this annual program. The WRP is the primary pipeline to bring students and recent college graduates with disabilities into Federal employment and the storehouse of the largest database of Schedule A candidates in the Federal government. Each year, WRP recruiters interview over 3,800 talented candidates from 320 schools across the country; however, due to the recent Federal government shutdown, student participation may drop by 50 percent. This means that the top students and recent graduates will go quickly to the first agencies seeking candidates. A list of prescreened applicants will be available early December. ODI recommends each facility appoint a representative to become familiar with WRP program information found at http://www.wrp.gov. Users should establish a free account by the first week in December.

Forty-eight WRP interns worked in VA during FY 2013; five of these interns converted to permanent employment.

To encourage greater VA-wide participation of the WRP, ODI is pleased to announce that for the fourth year in a row, the Office of Human Resources and Administration, as a part of the Human Capital Investment Plan for FY 2014, will continue to provide a centralized fund to cover the salary costs for WRP interns. The goal of the fund is to minimize funding barriers that may prevent full utilization of the WRP and is strictly for VA offices or facilities which need the funding. ODI will continue to administer the centralized fund this FY. Continued on page 7.
Training
Continued from Page 4

Training Due Date Extended

The due date for completion of the mandatory Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), Diversity and Conflict Management training for supervisors and managers has been extended. SES/Title 38, managers and supervisors have until December 31, 2013, to complete this course to meet the biennial requirement as directed in Secretary Shinseki’s EEO, Diversity, and No FEAR Policy Statement issued May 31, 2013. Completing this online course (VA TMS Item Number 1328672 – #DVA017), “EEO, Diversity, and Conflict Management Training for Managers and Supervisors,” is the only method to fulfill this requirement. If this course does not already appear as a recurring training event on the individual supervisor’s or manager’s TMS learning plan, contact the respective TMS administrator to ensure course #DVA017 is assigned. For more information, contact Carolyn Williams, Diversity Training Specialist, ODI, at Carolyn.Williams12@va.gov.

New Virtual Barrier Analysis Training

Barrier elimination is an important step in VA becoming a model employer. To achieve this status, VA has to create a barrier-free environment where all applicants and employees have the opportunity to compete and work to their fullest potential. This training course covers all aspects of the barrier analysis process under Management Directive 715 (MD-715) to include: analysis and interpretation of workforce statistics, trigger identification, barrier analysis investigation, preparing action plans, and following up on the action plan. Each VA facility has to identify barriers and create action plans on eliminating those identified barriers. This training is intended for employees who work with MD-715 and for all managers. Classes will be offered on the following dates from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. (EST):
- Thursday, December 12, 2013
- Thursday, January 9, 2014
- Thursday, February 20, 2014
- Thursday, March 6, 2014
- Thursday, March 27, 2014

Each session will be conducted via Microsoft Lync. Register at https://www.tms.va.gov/learning/user/deeplink_redirect.jsp?linkId=ITEM_DETAILS&componentID=3844925&co

VSSC HR Reporting and Workforce Analysis Tools Training

VA uses the VHA Support Service Center (VSSC) to store human resources (HR) data for all of VA in an easy to use reporting format. This interactive training on the VSSC HR Reporting Tools is designed to alert a wide range of managers, HR, equal employment opportunity (EEO) and diversity specialists to VSSC’s HR query applications. All managers have a duty to ensure there is equal opportunity in the workplace with regard to hiring, promotions, and other terms and conditions of employment. This training provides guidance on how to properly use the applications to conduct various workforce analyses, identify triggers, and define and distinguish between Relevant Civilian Labor Force vs. Civilian Labor Force. Training classes will be offered on the following dates from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. (EST):
- Thursday, January 16, 2014
- Wednesday, March 12, 2014
- Tuesday, May 13, 2014
- Wednesday, July 16, 2014
- Thursday, September 25, 2014

Each session will be conducted via Microsoft Lync. Register at https://www.tms.va.gov/learning/user/deeplink_redirect.jsp?linkId=ITEM_DETAILS&componentID=3823179&co

Diversity News: An Online Training Resource

2014 WRP Set to Kick Off

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ODI recommends that you promptly request access to the WRP site and identify qualified candidates to increase your chances for a WRP intern this FY. VA offices or facilities interested in hiring a WRP using their own funding should also visit the WRP Web site (http://www.wrp.gov) and request a password to access the intern database to identify and recruit an intern as a temporary or permanent hire. For record keeping purposes, please advise ODI when you hired an intern through the WRP. Detailed instructions will soon be available on VA’s Disability Program Web site at http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/pwd.aspx#WRP. For questions regarding the WRP and VA’s centralized fund, contact Aurelia Waters, WRP Coordinator, ODI, at (202) 461-4124 or Aurelia.Waters@va.gov.

Disability Issues

Processing Reasonable Accommodations

It is important to remember VA’s goal: serving Veterans. As of September 30, 2013, the Department employs over 300,000 individuals; 32 percent of those employees are Veterans. Twenty percent the Veteran employees indicate they have a disability. VA’s fiscal year 2014 onboard Veteran employee goal is 33 percent. VA’s strategic target for onboard Veteran employees remains 40 percent. We know a number of returning Veterans will have a disability so remaining flexible during the hiring process should be our number one priority. We also must keep an open mind to the reasonable accommodation procedures.

An applicant or employee may request a reasonable accommodation during the application or to perform the essential functions of their job. Managers and supervisors are fundamental to the reasonable accommodation process and should always engage in the interactive process with the employee. The key to the process is communication! The attitude toward the accommodation process should not be “No, we can’t do that,” rather “How can we do that?” The accommodation requested may not be the accommodation that will be granted, but it must be effective to the individual with the disability.

ODI manages a centralized fund that can be used to reimburse offices and facilities for any approved reasonable accommodation requests for equipment or software not provided by the Department of Defense’s Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program (CAP). We must be good stewards of taxpayer dollars, but cost should not be the only consideration when determining to grant or deny a request for reasonable accommodation. An inclusive work environment means making adjustments to remove any barriers that may exist.

VA’s procedures for processing reasonable accommodations are contained in “VA Handbook 5975.1, Processing Requests for Reasonable Accommodations from Employees and Applicants with Disabilities.” An update to the handbook with EEOC procedural guidance will be publicized in December 2013.

If you are an employee who needs an accommodation, please contact your Local Reasonable Accommodation Coordinator to initiate the process: http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/pwd.aspx#lrac. Please never assume that a disability is the same is an inability!

VA Diversity Council

Next Meeting Scheduled for January

The next VA Diversity Council (VADC) quarterly meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 15, 2013, from 1:00 to 3:00 pm in VA Central Office room 830 and via teleconference. Visit http://www.diversity.va.gov/council for more information.
VA’s workforce diversity remains relatively steady through October 2013. Although the VA workforce increased by 1,313 employees since the beginning of the fiscal year, the changes in representation for all groups in VA’s permanent and temporary workforce were negligible.

Comparing the demographic characteristics of VA’s workforce against the Relevant Civilian Labor Force (RCLF)*, the representation of White women, Hispanic men and women, and Asian men are lower than expected. White women representation is currently at 78 percent of RCLF, Hispanic men are at 79 percent, Hispanic women are at 62 percent, and Asian men are at 93 percent of RCLF.

**Diversity Index**

The Diversity Index is a single measure of workforce diversity that measures the convergence of VA’s aggregate workforce distribution by race, ethnicity, and gender to the Civilian Labor Force (CLF)** or RCLF. Since September 2013, there has been 0.05 percentage point increase in the RCLF-based diversity index and a 0.01 percentage point increase in the CLF-based diversity index.

**People with Targeted Disabilities**

The proportion of people with targeted disabilities in VA’s workforce has increased by 0.01 percentage points since the beginning of the fiscal year. As of October 2013, we have met the Secretary’s 2 percent onboard goal.

The hiring of people with targeted disabilities also increased since the start of the fiscal year. Among all hires, people with targeted disabilities represent 3.55 percent, 0.55 percentage points above the Secretary’s 3 percent hiring goal. Let’s keep up the good work, VA!

For more information, contact ODI’s Workforce Analysis Team at odi@va.gov.

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*Relevant Civilian Labor Force (RCLF) reflects all U.S. Citizens 16 years of age or over, excluding those in Armed Forces, who are employed in or actively seeking employment in VA specific occupations. This is based on the 2010 Census and does include Puerto Rico.

**Civilian Labor Force (CLF) consists of all U.S. Citizens 16 years of age or over, excluding those in Armed Forces, who are employed or seeking employment. The CLF contains all occupations and is an accurate comparative basis for Federal Government-wide comparison, the largest employer in the U.S. with all occupations represented. This is based on the 2010 Census which is shown to be a higher benchmark compared with the 2000 Census. The CLF does not include Puerto Rico.
D&I Online

The mission of the Department of Veterans Affairs’ diversity and inclusion program is to develop and implement a comprehensive, integrated, and strategic focus on diversity and inclusion as key components of the Department’s human resources strategies. Here’s a sampling of online tools available at http://www.diversity.va.gov that can help leverage diversity and build inclusion:

► Observance resources.
► Training resources, guides, and reports.
► Links to professional and community organizations.
► Best practices for diversity management.

D&I In Your E-mail Inbox

ODI sends out NewsLink, an e-mail message with annotated links to current news items and other information related to leveraging diversity and building inclusion. For a FREE subscription to this electronic news service, e-mail odi@va.gov with the words SUBSCRIBE NEWSLINK in the subject line. Find a sample of NewsLink at http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/newsl ink.aspx.

D&I on Your TV or PC

Diversity News is a video program co-produced by ODI and the VA Central Office Broadcast Center for you. Diversity News follows VA News on the VA Knowledge Network, Content Distribution Network, channel 2. Programs are also available at http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/dn.aspx.

December 2013 Calendar

http://www.diversity.va.gov/calendar

Universal Human Rights Month
Hanukkah (Feast of Lights/Dedication) November 27–December 5
Rosa Parks Day December 1
World AIDS Day December 1
International Day of Persons with Disabilities December 3
National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day December 7
Human Rights Day December 10
Human Rights Week December 10–17
Bill of Rights Day December 15
Christmas December 25
Kwanzaa December 26–January 1
New Year’s Eve December 31